Altar Influences

ALTAR INFLUENCES.

1 Cor.9:13 They that wait at the altar are partakers with the altar."

INTRO. In the text Paul draws his figure from the Jewish sacrifices. According to the law of Moses the priest who ministered at the altar received his living from the altar. His whole life was devoted to the altar woship, and he not only obtained his living from it, but his very character was shaped by it. Long waiting upon the altar so modified an Eli or a Samuel as to make their very appearance suggest sacred things.

All ministrations, whether sacred or secular, largely determine the character and attitude of those ministering.

The priest of Molach, whose god is an idol of iron, its body a fiery furnace into which are cast he live children of the worshippers, becomse thru long attendance at this awful service so hardened to the sight of suffering that he is as merciless as his idol.

The Phoenician priests of Baal and the Greek priests of Venus, practicing the vilest kinds of licentiousness as acts of worship to their gods sank to the lowest levels of beastliness, while their temples reeked with filth and disease. Long waiting at a depraved altar makes one partake to himself of its depravity.

I. What a man does ~~////~~ largely determines what he becomes. Every man is marked by his occulapion. Not difficult to pick out of the passingcrowd the lawyer, the banker, the farmer, the merchantman, the school teacher, etc. And all becaue the altar at which we serve puts its impress upon us.

// Hawthorne's story of "The Great Stone Face."

The boy seeing on the side of the mt. the clear-cut face so dignified and kind in expressior was told that some day there would come to the

village a man resembling this stone face and that he would be the greatest benefactor and friend of the people. The boy daily studied the face and daily awaited the arrival of the coming benefactor. But time and again he was disappointed. The rich man did not resemble the face, nor did the great scholar. One after another for years proved to be a disappointment, in some manner falling short of the resemblance. Still the boy held onto his faith and in contemplation of the great stone face he would picture the man who must resemble it. The man must be lofty in thots, serene in his faith, pure in character, gentle and kind and tender to his people. And as he thus meditated and anticipated the boy himself grew more and more gentle to all, thotful and considerate and helpful, manly and full of tenderness which took the form of unmistakable dignity and kindness. The years went by, and as his hair whitened and his face took on more and more the internal thot and character of the man, the poeple of the valley came to realize that he was the friend and counsellor of them all, who was the very image of the stone face- the benefactor and friend who was already come to them.

3. All this but points out that salvation is by way of character and that thus we shape our destinies. Not, of course, by virtue of character are we saved and destined, but by the sanctification of character.

This is just as true of our omissions as of our active life. Neglect of God and of one's duties to him is the commonest cause of doubts and disaffections. Ifyou do not wait on God's altar you need not expect to partake of that altar.

II. All of uswait on some altar, if not that of the true God, then at some other, and our altar is shaping our character and determining our destiny.

3. II.1. The man who worships at the altar of sense indulgence.

Always out for a good time which he tries to have by pampering every appetite and animal desire, with no great purpose; living for nothing in particular with no concern for spiritual interests, just living along day by day like any other fairly respectable animal, and too often going on to excesses which it would be an insult to beasts to call beastly.

Then the time come, and not long either, when this worshipper at the shrine of sense indulgence comes to a ned of some kind. He turns to his altar for help, but all he finds there is silent mockery. Perhaps he is in financial straits and need money. Alas, having been a spendthrift, he has no credit, then he remembers with remorse his many squandering in riotous living. Or, perhaps, ill health has nefallen him and he finds himself stretched on a bed of pain. Alas, the devotees at his altar do not bother to call on him- from them he gets no comfort.

At last old age comes, with its tottering body and hoary head, unhonored and uncrownedM but he now bows in vain at his altar from which he has so long partaken as to have lost every capacity, save that of sense indulgence, and now his capaciy for that is gone.

2. Then there is the altar of accumulation, whose devotees strive above all else to get rich. Such a devotee often becomes a mere money-getting machine. Thestory of Midas making fitly tells the end of his worship. Everything Midas touched became gold, but he could not use it. His very food became gold but he could not eat it. His drink became gold but he could not drink it. His clothing became gold, but he could not wear it. His friend became gold and he could not love it.

II.4. There is another altar that deceives many by its very respectfulness- refined selfishness. They look with scorn at the revellers in animal pleasures. They hold themselves aloof not only from the sins of men but also from sufferings and the needs of their fellows until they become cold-hearted and unloving until there is no sympathy keft in them.

III. But how different from all such altars is the altar of Jesus.Christ, the altar of devotion to God, to Truth, to Righteousness, to Fellowmen!

To worship at this altar develops the very best in you. Itholds up before you in Jesus, the one perfect ideal, the one character in history in which noone has ever been able to find a flaw. It stands for everything that is good and true and beautiful.

The altar of Jesus Christ denies you nothing worth while to be found at any other altar.

It does not deby you animal pleasures, but it helps you to keep them in such control that they minister to the soul and make for real and enduring happiness. It does not keep you from making money, but enables you to make it and use it wisely for the greatest good in life. It does not prevent you from making the best of yourself, but it does keep you from turning yourself into a bog without an outlet, a selfzcentered useless creature.

The altar of Christ is the altar of Service, makibg you a blessing to others and thereby a blessing to yourself. The call to Jesus Christ ought to rest heaviily on every one of us because it is a call to give ourselves to the very best on behalf of loved ones and friends, of community and state and mankind.

5.

CONCLUSION.

1. The story is told of a famous lady who once reigned in Paris society that she she was so homely that her mother said to her one day, "My poor child, you are too ugly for any one ever to fall in love with you." From that time Madame de Circourt began to be very kind to the pauper children of the village, the servants of the household, even the birds that hopped about the garden walls. She was distressed if she happened to be unable to render a service. This good-will toward everybody made her the idol of the city. Tho her complexion was sallow, her gray eyes small and sunken, yet she held in devotion to her the greatest men of her time. Her unselfish interests in others made her, it is said, perfectly irresistible.

2. The beautiful home with its ugly heart.

3.

Moral Beauty

The contemplation of moral beauty is always wholesome and uplifting. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." The power of thought to form character and regulate conduct is fully recognized in the apostolic injunction, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." As Christ dwelt continually in the Father, so Paul's life was hid with Christ in God. In all the vast expanse of the apostle's thought Christ was foundation, centre and summit. "To me to live is Christ." His writings are charged with the joy and blessedness of his life in the Spirit. "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." The Christian is privileged like Paul to contemplate the transforming glory of Christ in the wealth of the gospel itself, in its victorious sweep in history, it its triumphs in individual experience.—Simon Blocker.